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Apple-Roasting

Maud Lindsay

Once upon a time, in a small village where cobblestone streets were flanked by neat, thatched cottages, the Vicar and the Squire were well-known figures. They had a tradition, a warm and enchanting one, that brought the villagers together on chilly autumn evenings. They would gather at the large hearth in the Vicar's house, and the air would be filled with the delightful aroma of roasting apples and the sound of cheery laughter.

The villagers, men and women, old and young, would all huddle together around the fire, their faces aglow in the flickering light. Apples from the Squire's plentiful orchard would be skewered on sticks and roasted over the hearth. The Squire, a wise old man with twinkling eyes and a hearty laugh, was fond of telling stories. He would spin the most fascinating tales, full of magic and mystery, heroes and villains, and the children would listen with rapt attention, their eyes as wide as saucers.

One particular evening, after the Squire had finished telling a particularly riveting tale about a knight and a dragon, the Vicar declared that the apples and stories had both been delightfully delicious. Looking at the baskets still heaving with apples, he teased the Squire, certain that there were dozens more tales hidden away in his mind.

The Squire, however, simply shook his head, claiming he had exhausted his repertoire. "But let's continue the fun by roasting some more apples," he suggested, and the crowd eagerly agreed.

As the apples sizzled and popped in the fire, the room was filled with laughter and merriment. Suddenly, someone suggested a game. The owner of the apple that burned first would have to tell the next story. All eyes turned to the sizzling apples, each hoping that theirs wouldn't be the unfortunate one.

As it so happened, the apple that blackened first belonged to a kind-hearted matron, who was busy tending to her lively brood of children. She was a natural storyteller, often calming her children with stories when they were upset or ill.

Accepting the task with a good-natured laugh, she settled her youngest on her lap. With the room silent in anticipation, the warm light from the fire dancing on her face, she began a tale, as old as time yet as fresh as a blooming flower, leaving everyone in the room eager for her story, as another apple roasted over the fire, ready for the next storyteller to spin their tale.



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